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MILLINERY & DRESSMAKING IN EARLY LODI

by Janice Roth

In the 1800's here in Lodi a majority of women worked in and around the house. Usually they married somewhat early in their life and took care of their husband, children, garden, and house. We must remember that the simple task of washing clothes was a time-consuming project.

First wood was needed to heat the water and then the water had to be carried to the house and heated on the wood stove. The clothes were washed by hand, then rinsed and wrung by hand and hung on the line to dry. After the clothes were dry, they were gathered in and the process of ironing was started. All this required much time and stamina.

There were some women who did not marry, were widowed or were forced to work outside the home to provide for themselves and their family. These women usually had few marketable skills outside of the domestic line as few women attended college. This article attempts to explore some of the occupations of women in the Lodi area during the late 1800's. Milliner, newspaper editor, teacher and seamstress were some of the more popular business careers pursued by women in Lodi before the 1900's. Advertisements in a local newspaper of the time lend credence to the local business activity of women.

An article published on September 12, 1883 in *The Valley Review*, an early Lodi newspaper edited by Gertie de Force-Cluff, entitled "Business for Ladies" states, "The opportunity for ladies to find employment that is both suitable and remunerative are limited; their pay is usually poor as compared with the salaries paid to men in the same lines of occupation. But there are



▲ Mrs. John (Cecilia) Doyle.



An unidentified lady wearing an elegant suit, black leather gloves and a bonnet type hat that complements her hair style. ►



▲ Mattie, Allen, Emory & Celia Thompson and Lena Kane. The ladies are wearing the latest millinery fashions with their white summer dresses.

some very noted exceptions; journalism, the drama, music and platform offer equal advantages to men and women; and there is one occupation in which women are sometimes more successful than men, and that is in the management of agencies. In this line, the Queen City Suspender Company, of Cincinnati O., are offering inducements to ladies that we think ought to attract attention. They are now manufacturing and introducing their new Stoking (sic) Supporters for Ladies and children, and their unequaled Skirt Suspenders for Ladies. None should be without them, our leading physicians recommend them, and are loud in their praise. These goods are manufactured by ladies who have made the wants of ladies and children a study, and they ask us to refer them to some reliable and energetic lady to introduce them in this county, and we

certainly think that an earnest solicitation in every household would meet with a ready response, and that a determined woman could make a handsome salary. And have an exclusive agency, We advise some lady who is in need of employment to send to the Company her name and address, and mention this paper. Address Queen City Suspenders Company, Nos. 177 and 179 Main Street, Cincinnati, Ohio."

The above advertisement for employment certainly points out the feeling of the time. Gertie de Force-Cluff, editor, was herself an active voice in



▲ Emma Wilkinson



Georgia Carleton Lillie, wearing a multi-colored hat which includes a bird. ▶



Myrtle (Myrt) Hollis and Eva (Dougherty) Perriman, ▲ both wearing hats with lots of feathers.



▲ Wife of Dr. Grant

Bertha Hutton Wheraty wears ▶
a comb in her hair.

the Lodi economy by editing one of the local newspapers of the day. *The Valley Review* was published twice weekly for several years and kept the townspeople informed on local and national issues, along with editorials and opinions of the editor.

Women's fashions were noteworthy in the early days of Lodi, as in many towns and cities across the nation. Although most women made their own clothing and clothing for their family, they did need help for special or fancier clothes. Women could earn a living by making dresses or hats for other women. The latest fashions were available through the milliner and the seamstress. Hats and bonnets could be very elaborate, combining many fabrics and decorative features. Materials used could include velvet, silk, felt, kid, horsehair, taffeta, organdie, straw, flowers, tail feathers, and beads of steel, bronze or glass.

Hats and bonnets were built up high and ornamented with curled ostrich feathers, fruit, stuffed birds and wired ribbons were often used. In the 1880-90's light colors were the fashion otherwise muted shades of green, red plum, dark blue, black, red and brown were dominant colors

used. Straw hats, the midshipman or sailors'



Inez Smith ▶

hat was also a popular style of the decade influenced by the French and English. While in mourning, a black hat with a veil was worn.

Hair fashions of the day were held in place by combs of tortoise shell or amber some which were extremely decorative. Hat pins were used to hold the hats in securely on the head.

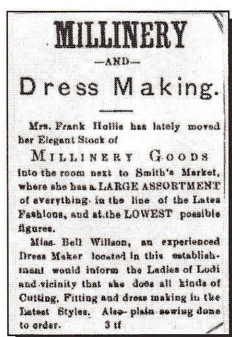
Hat making became a trade after the discovery of a method for making felt in the 1400's. Zadoc Benedict established the first hat factory in the U.S. at Danbury, Conn. in 1780.



His factory turned out 18 fur hats made of rabbit and beaver skins in a week. John Nicholas Genin of New York City made the first soft felt hats for women in 1851. The art of making women's hats is called millinery. Millinery designers try to create new designs that will appeal to the public and therefore had to

be aware of new hair styles and clothing fashions so that the hats would harmonize with the hair styles and fashions of the day.

Many women were dressmakers and/or milliners in the late 1800's evidenced by the following ads and tidbits in *The Valley Review* from 1881 and 1883. "New millinery Goods - Ladies wishing the latest novelties in millinery for themselves or children or a suit made in the latest fashion, can be accommodated by calling on



An unidentified woman wearing a hat full of flowers ▲
and a cape made especially to accommodate her bustle.



▲ Cora Teoff.

Mrs. M. E. Tindle, at Scott's building, Lodi, where can be found a huge selection of millinery of latest summer fashions." Farther down in the same column under New Millinery at Woodbridge it is written, "Mrs. A. E. Myers, would respectfully announce to the ladies of Woodbridge and vicinity that she has purchased the entire stock of millinery goods belonging to the late Mary Dougherty, and removed them to her residence opposite the United Brethren's Church. The stock will be enlarged from time to time as the demand may require, and will guarantee satisfaction."

The October 11, 1882 issue of *The Valley Review* states, "Mrs. Hollis



has just returned from the city with a new stock of fashionable millinery. She has had a new show case window put in her store which displays the new goods to advantage. Miss Belle Wilson who has been associated with Mrs. Hollis as dressmaker will open a shop this week at Lockeford. The ladies of that place have offered her tempting inducements to make this change." And farther down the column on same date under the title of "Woodbridge Items" this article appears. "Mrs. Willing returned Sunday from San Francisco, where she has been for the

last two weeks visiting her sister and buying millinery goods to open a shop in Dick Cope's new building."



▲ Notice the comb on the back of Mrs. Charles (Carrie) Boalt's hairdo.



▲ Belle (Dingle) Hull, wife of Dr. Hull of Woodbridge.



▲ Maude Crabtree, daughter of the owner of the livery stable.

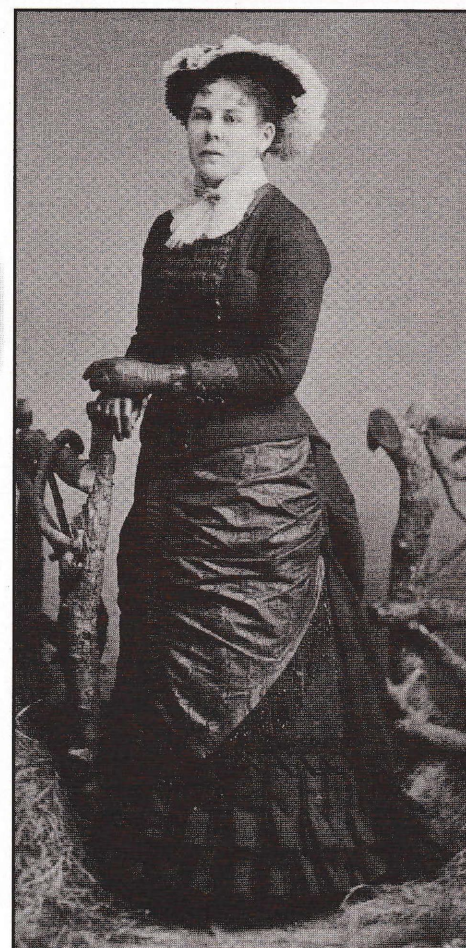


▲ Pearl Wallace

◀ Ora (Pixley) Whitaker



▲ Mrs. Hubbard of Stockton was a close friend of Mrs. Charles Ivory of Lodi.



This lady was probably Mrs. Henderson of ▲ Woodbridge. She is wearing a hat with an ostrich plume.



This unidentified woman may be wearing one of the old ▲ ladies caps advertised in *The Valley Review*.

And under new "Millinery at Lockeford," – "Mrs. Chad has opened a millinery shop at Lockeford with new and fresh goods just from the city. Hair a specialty. Please give her a call and examine her stock before purchasing elsewhere."

"Mrs. Tindle has moved her millinery establishment to Greens Building next door to the Green Brothers store," and a little later, "Old ladies caps a specialty suitable for grandma; at Mrs. Myers' Woodbridge. Still another announcement, "Go to the new Milliner, Mrs. M. F. Sharp in Mrs. Scott's new brick building, if you want the latest styles. She receives new goods every week. Her motto is 'live and let live.' She also does hair work. Give her a call."

In the line of dress-making an advertisement in *The Valley Review* of April 1883 explains the

New Home Sewing Machine as "above all competitors and having more improvements than all other sewing machines combined." Although the first sewing machine was patented in 1790 by Thomas Saint, an Englishman, it was not until 1846 when Elias Howe patented the first practical sewing machine as we know it today. Other improvements were made by A. B. Wilson and Isaac Singer. Wilson introduced the four-motion automatic feed and Singer patented the foot-operated treadle and the presser foot with a yielding spring, which holds the fabric down on the feed plate. It was not until 1889 that the Singer Sewing Machine Company first put an electric motor on a sewing machine.

On May 16, 1882 *The Valley Review* article states, "Mrs. F. M. Copeland is now prepared to do

dressmaking in all the latest styles. None but the experienced hands employed, satisfaction guaranteed. Prices reasonable." One must assume that ladies in the dressmaking business used some of the latest innovations of the day such as the *New Home* or *Singer Sewing Machine*.

Some of the business women branched out and diversified as the following article of October 4, 1882 indicates. "Woodbridge to have another millinery store. Mrs. F. M. Copeland, the fashionable dressmaker of Lodi, went to San Francisco Saturday to remain a week or ten days. She will bring all the latest styles in ladies' and children's dresses with her when she returns. Now girls bring on your new fall suits and have them made in the latest fashions." A later article states, "Miss Bell Wilson, an experienced dressmaker has opened an establishment in

Lockeford. Dresses cut and made in the latest fashion."

On July 18, 1883 Gertie de Force Cluff reported that, "While in Woodbridge last week we called on Mrs. A. E. Myers; millinery establishment. She has added many new attractions to the store, and has a full line of Wakefield Rattan platform and rocker chairs, also ladies ready made underwear, linen dusters, dress linings and trimmings, and many other articles for girls and women. Parties living in that vicinity can not do better than by giving her their patronage."



▲ Inez Smith, daughter of Dave Smith, at age 15.



▲ Ceda Parody and her little nephew, son of her sister Zelma McCormick.

MRS. ADDA ZEIGENFELDER
Would respectfully announce to the ladies of Lodi and vicinity that she has lately opened a

Millinery & Dressmaking ESTABLISHMENT

Two doors south of the Sargent House, where she has a

FULL LINE OF CHOICE MILLINERY
Selling below Cost!

DRESSES CUT AND MADE
In the Latest Fashions. 40

▲ This ad appeared in *The Valley Review* in the 1880's.



Dollie Childs Harmon ►



▲ Blanche Housman wearing a pretty summer dress.



Mame Westmoreland ▲

School teaching was also an occupation that attracted many women. An early article noted that the "Lodi school opened Monday. The teachers are: principal, Prof. O.E. Swain, Miss Florence Russell, Miss Wright, and Miss Keagle. As the Teachers' Institute is in session this week in Stockton, there will be vacation till next Monday.

Laura de Force-Gordon advertised in every edition of her sister's paper with the simple yet informative ad, "Laura de Force-Gordon, Attorney-at-Law, Office and residence on Lockeford Street, bet. Main and School Sts., Lodi, CA." Laura also practiced law in San Francisco.



◀ Children's clothing was also made by the seamstress.

The following article appearing in *The Valley Review* on August 22, 1889, illustrates not only the humor women had but also incorporates several occupations of women. "Widow Roads and Widow Barns, together with S. Stacks and O. Shed, it is rumored, are about to complete arrangements to secure the two Lockeford warehouses for the purpose of converting them into lodging houses, an enterprise very much needed in our midst. Misses Bush and Trees, two old spinsters who long have been in the business of entertaining lodgers, will, it is said, superintend the internal regulations of these houses when completed, and lull their lodgers to sleep by their shadows. A necessity like this, when seen by our enterprising citizens is



▲ Left to right: Ruby Thom, Mrs. Emma Nugent and Ada Raven. All these ladies have similar hairdos wearing combs.

Grace (Lease) Kroyer ►



Latest
—IN—
Styles
MILINERY
AND
FANCY GOODS
LACES, RIBBONS,
PLUMES, FLOWERS, ETC.
the new Styles in Straw
Goods for Ladies and
Children.
M. A. DEVOLL,
Corner 1st and Weber ave., Stockton. 28-29

FASHIONABLE
MILLINERY.
—O—
MRS. M. A. DEVOLL,
The well known Fashionable Milliner of
Stockton, is now offering the Largest and
best Selected stock of
SUMMER MILLINERY,
of all the Latest Styles and Patterns ever
before displayed in the county.
HATS, CAPS,
BONNETS, PLUMES, FLOWERS,
LACES AND TRIMMINGS.
All goods sold at reasonable prices.
Corner Hunter Street and Weber Avenue.
In Mansion House Block. 48 if

▲ These ads appeared in *The Valley Review* in the 1880's. Notice that the address of the store is not given and spelling varies in many ads and articles.

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supplied at once, we are determined to accommodate all that comes."

One can see that the women around Lodi contributed substantially to the development of the Lodi area. Whether they stayed home to raise their family or worked out of the home to provide services needed their contribution did not go unnoticed during their time or today.



REFERENCES & CREDITS

The Valley Review, 1880's

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▲ Charlie Teoff.